

# THE LIFE AND EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF Shri R. V. PARULEKAR

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1. **Introductory:** This volume of the selected writings of Shri R. V. Parulekar will meet a long-felt need of the educational world. His studies on the problem of literacy have been so profound and have made so great a mark on the students of fundamental education that his books have been constantly in demand, not only from the students of education in India, but even from those in other parts of the world. Unfortunately most of his writings have recently been out of print and requests for the supply of their copies had to be reluctantly replied to in the negative. The publication of this volume on the auspicious occasion when its author completes seventy years of age will, therefore, be regarded as a blessing by educationists interested in the problem of mass literacy, especially because it brings together, for the first time, most of his earlier writings which were scattered in the old issues of different journals. No words can, therefore, be adequate to express the gratitude of the teaching profession to the Celebrations Committee for having made this book available to the public in so attractive a form and at so low a price.

The Celebrations Committee have naturally approached their problem from the personal point of view and have timed the publication of this volume on the seventy-first birthday of Shri Parulekar. But it would not be out of place to point out that there is a wider national significance also for this occasion. The framers of the Second Five-Year Plan were confronted with a situation similar to that which Shri Parulekar has been trying to solve for the last 25 years. On the one hand they found that (there is an intense desire for the spread of education among the people and on the other, they were faced with such a shortage of funds that only a sum of about Rs. 300 crores could be assigned to education as against a demand of Rs. 1,080 crores.) They were, therefore, compelled to suggest that (economy devices like the shift system which are being advocated by Shri Parulekar should be seriously considered by educational administrators during the Second Five-Year Plan and that the available resources should be so utilised as to secure the maximum expansion possible.) It, therefore, goes without saying that (teachers and administrators throughout the country will soon have to study this problem of balancing our vast educational needs against the slender resources now available and that they will also be com-

pelled to work out several economy devices with the ultimate object of realising the constitutional directive that free and compulsory primary education upto 14 years shall be provided for every child by 1961. The publication of this volume is, therefore, very opportune as it will enable the Education Departments of the States to understand properly "the mechanics of educational expansion in an under-developed economy" and would materially assist in realising the targets which have been defined in the Second Five-Year Plan.

The principal object of this article is to pay a tribute to this grand old teacher of the Bombay State and to join with his friends and admirers in a prayer that he should be blessed with a long and peaceful life and that he be spared to serve the educational needs of the country until his long cherished dream of a hundred per cent literacy is realised. It would not be out of place, however, to precede this tribute by a narration of the main events of his personal life.

**2. Early life and education (1886-1911):** The biography of a teacher, or even of an educational administrator like Shri Parulekar, is never crowded and can be briefly summarised. Shri R. V. Parulekar, or "Ramabhau" as he is more intimately known to his circle of friends, was born in the village of Parule of the Vengurla Taluka in the Ratnagiri District on 7th of July 1886, as the eldest son of a family of Goud Saraswat Brahmins. His father, Shri Vithal Govind Parulekar, was a landlord in fairly easy circumstances. But by about 1892, he lost all his lands as a result of a family settlement and had to maintain himself by running a small shop. This gave but a meagre income at best and as he had a large family to maintain, Ramabhau had to obtain his education against a background of financial difficulties. In Maharashtra this is, by no means, an unusual feature of the education of children in lower middle class families.

The village of Parule appears to have a fairly big population in the Census Reports; but it is divided into 32 hamlets each of which has only a small population. Fortunately, however, the hamlet in which Ramabhau was born had a local primary school which taught upto primary standards VI—the highest standard of the primary course as it then existed. To this humble school, Ramabhau was sent as a student at the age of seven and he remained there till 1897 when he completed primary standard V. His father then thought it desirable to send him to an English school and as no such provision existed in Parule, he shifted his entire family to Vengurla where the Municipality conducted a small Anglo-Vernacular Middle School. Ramabhau studied at this school from 1897 to 1902 and completed the first five standards of the secondary school course. He was then sent to the Bhandari High School at Malvan where he studied from 1902 to 1904 and passed the Matriculation Examination in the latter year.

Ordinarily this would have meant an end of all education for Ramabhau because his father did not have the financial resources to send him to a college. But fortunately Ramabhau had stood high in the Matriculation Examination so that he was able to secure a scholarship in the Elphinstone College of Bombay. The amount of the scholarship was small—Rs. 10 per month—but it was further augmented by a loan scholarship of Rs. 10 p.m. from a charitable fund. The amount of the scholarship itself was to be increased to Rs. 15 in the Intermediate Class and to Rs. 20 in the B.A. Classes. In those days of low prices, even this small sum of Rs. 20 to 30 was adequate to meet all the expenses of a college student with simple habits. Ramabhau, therefore, joined the Elphinstone College in Bombay in 1905. As he passed every college examination in the second class and secured a high rank, the college scholarship was awarded to him year after year and he was able to complete his college education and obtain the B.A. degree, with Physics and Chemistry as optional subjects, in 1908. These were the first years when he left the rural surroundings of his childhood and stayed in a metropolitan city like Bombay, devoting himself exclusively to his studies. Looking back, Ramabhau recalls them as one of the happiest periods of his life.

(It is the general law of the world that sorrow and happiness succeed each other like night and day and very soon after his happy college days were over, a period of storm and stress came into Ramabhau's life.) Early in 1909, he lost his father so that he was called upon, not only to maintain himself in Bombay, but also to support, in his native place, a large family which consisted of his mother, two younger sisters \* and a brother. He had, therefore, to cut out all his ambitions of further studies and seek employment as a part-time assistant master in the Maratha High School which was then located in Angrevadi, Girgaum. He served this institution for three years; but as the salary that he received was not adequate to meet his needs, he had to engage in private tuitions—both in the morning and at night. One of his students of this period was a European lady who wanted to learn Sanskrit and who used to address him as "Pandit Parulekar". He stayed at such a distance from her residence that he lost nearly the whole of his morning in this single tuition, but the sum of Rs. 20 which she paid every month was too important to be lost. (The recollection of adversities successfully overcome is always a pleasant pastime) and I have often listened with great interest and pleasure to Ramabhau's inimitable description of his miserable life during this period. It must, however, have been very tiresome indeed to do a number of tuitions and part-time teaching work and in addition, to prepare for the M.A. degree on which he had set his heart. But Ramabhau persisted

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\* Of his four sisters, two had been married prior to 1909.

valiantly and obtained the M.A. degree (with Chemistry as principal subject) in 1911. His financial difficulties lengthened the period of study to three years and he also failed to secure a class. But Masters of Arts were rare in those days and soon afterwards, his immediate financial worries came to an end when the Topivala High School of Malvan invited him to be its Head Master (1912). Ramabhau thereupon left Bombay and did not return again to it until sixteen years later.

3. **Headmaster of the Topivala High School, Malvan (1912-28):** From 1912 to 1928, Ramabhau worked as the Head Master of the Topivala High School at Malvan. Supported by the generous family of the Topivala Desais which has contributed several lakhs of rupees to the cause of education in this State, this High School was already a promising institution in 1912. But under the able guidance of Ramabhau who is a first-rate teacher, it soon rose in stature and became one of the best High Schools in the Ratnagiri District. (His great scholarship, keen sense of humour and super-abundant kindliness made him loved by his students some of whom have since risen to great eminence in public life.) (His democratic temperament and infinite capacity to adjust to all angularities made him an efficient Head Master who was able to carry all his colleagues with him and also to establish cordial relations with the Department and the public.) The Topivala High School, therefore, soon began to increase in strength and put forth better results. Shri Anant Shivaji Desai Topivala who had only promised a small donation of Rs. 5,000 when the High School was started and named after him in 1911, soon began to love the institution and gave munificent support for acquisition of lands and construction of buildings. He also endowed it with a donation of Rs. 80,000. In the departmental circles also, the reputation of the High School stood high and Shri R. V. Parulekar was looked upon as one of the ablest of Head Masters in the State.

Today few people realise how difficult a job it was to work as a Head Master of a secondary school during this period. Those were years of great political unrest when even the functions of the Education Department were partly of a police character and it was required to see that no subversive activities of any type were carried on in any recognised school and that no teacher committed the sin of infecting his students with a sense of patriotism. The rules and regulations of the Department were extremely strict and were enforced with a rigour which would be difficult to believe. The European Inspectors of schools were a terror to the humble Head Masters of private secondary schools and the Indian Inspectors often proved to be even worse than their masters. To add to all such insults, a further injury to private schools was done by the then policy of the Education Department which spent a very large portion of the funds available on improving a few

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High School, Malvan  
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Government schools as "models" to private enterprise, so that the non-Government secondary schools could only be given miserably small grants-in-aid. A sensitive and proud soul like that of Ramabhau chafed at the humiliation to which the Head Master of a private school had often to submit. His creative instinct also revolted against the cramping influence of the Departmental regulations and he began to feel that secondary education would really be better off if a greater freedom were to be allowed to the schools and if the Head Masters were entrusted with a greater responsibility. (He also felt that if the Department would drop the idea of developing Government High Schools as models and would spend the bulk of the funds available on improving the grants-in-aid to private schools, the cause of secondary education would progress on sounder lines)\* It is not necessary to describe in detail either the numerous experiences of his Head Mastership with the humorous description of which Ramabhau often regales his friends, or with his deep musings on the reform of secondary education. It would be enough to state that (they formed the basis of his research work in England and of his later attempts to educate and improve the secondary schools of this State.)

In spite of the professional difficulties described above, his long tenure of office as Head Master of the Topivala High School brought two great opportunities to Ramabhau. The first opportunity came in 1916 when (he was selected for admission to the Secondary Training College at Bombay. He stayed here for a year and obtained the S.T.C. Diploma with a first-class. This college had been started in 1906, but even in 1916, the training of the secondary teachers was still in its infancy. The entire staff of the college consisted of two members—a European Principal and an Indian Vice-Principal.) Ramabhau's reminiscences of this collegiate year are of very great interest. Apart from the light which they throw on his own personal life, they are of importance as depicting (the rather crude manner in which teachers were trained at this period when the teaching of general and special methods was regarded as the be-all and end-all of all training institutions.) An even more important opportunity, however, came six years later when the late Shri Anant Shivaji Desai Topivala gave a scholarship of Rs. 400 per month to enable Ramabhau to go to England with a view to obtaining a post-graduate degree in education. Ramabhau accordingly sailed in January 1922, obtained the T.D. of the University of London and the M.Ed. of the University of Leeds, and returned to India in February 1924. For his M.Ed. degree, he wrote a thesis on *the Problem of Education in Bombay Presidency* (with special reference to

\* In this connection, the interested student may refer to Ramabhau's paper on *Government Secondary Schools* published in the *Progress of Education*, January and March 1926. This document has not been reprinted here, mainly because its thesis is now out-dated. But it created a veritable sensation at the time of its publication.

higher education) under the guidance of Professor Strong. This document was referred to Sir Michael Sadler, as an examiner who appreciated it very greatly and recommended that it should be published forthwith. Unfortunately, this recommendation was not seriously taken up by anyone so that an excellent work remained unknown for a number of years. Recently it became financially possible to publish the thesis; but the proposal had to be dropped on the ground that most of its recommendations had come to be accepted by Government and that it had largely become obsolete due to sheer lapse of time. The excellent chapter on the *Medium of Instruction* included in the second part of the thesis, however, has been printed in this volume,\* partly because the valuable material which it contains is still generally unknown and partly as an indication of the high standard of research work which was done by Ramabhau for his M.Ed. Examination.

It is worthy of record that Ramabhau had the unique good fortune to study under eminent educationists like John Adam and T. Percy Nunn. Both the professors were greatly impressed by Ramabhau and the latter in particular has spoken about his scholarship and capacity in glowing terms. "I wish it to be clear," wrote Nunn in a testimonial issued in 1922, "that Mr. Parulekar is, in my judgment, a teacher and a student of great merit, judged by any standard, and, in particular, that he stands high among the best men we have received from India. In addition to attending the ordinary lectures and classes in this College (including special courses on the teaching of English and Geography), he has read assiduously in the libraries of the India Office and the British Museum with a view to the thesis which he will present for the degree of M.A. His research has direct reference to the educational problems of the Bombay Presidency and can hardly fail to increase his value to the service of his native province." Coming from an authority like Nunn, this is indeed a great tribute; and the review of Ramabhau's later life shows that it was well deserved and even prophetic.

On his return from England, Ramabhau's status as an educationist of repute was accepted in official and non-official circles alike. The first formal recognition of this came when he was appointed as the only Head Master on the Joint Examination Board which used to conduct the Matriculation and S.L.C. Examinations (1925). The second recognition came soon afterwards in 1927 when he was appointed as a Member of the Committee on Primary and Secondary Education, known popularly as the Hesketh Committee. The report of this Committee was published in 1929 and it shows, to some extent, the influence of the ideas which Ramabhau had stated in his thesis and which have been briefly incorporated in a preceding paragraph. It was

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\* See pp. 1-40, *supra*.

obviously impossible for the Committee to subscribe to the radical views which Ramabhau held on the subject. He, therefore, had to resort to a non-official platform to put forward his ideas and it was one of the lucky coincidences of his life that he now met the late Shri M. R. Paranjape. (Both Shri Paranjape and Shri Parulekar were champions of the cause of private secondary schools and their desire to reduce departmental control and increase the status and independence of private schools was equally strong. They, therefore, made a common cause and the *Progress of Education* which Shri Paranjape edited from Poona carried on a strong and continuous crusade on behalf of the private schools.) Ramabhau always recalls his friendship with Shri M. R. Paranjape as one of the brightest spots in his life and students of education need not be told of the great service which this pair of teachers has done to further the independence and autonomy of private enterprise in secondary education.

4. The Secretary of the Schools Committee, Bombay (1928-41): In 1928 came another break in Ramabhau's career—he retired from the Topivala High School and decided to seek employment elsewhere. Just about this time, the post of the Secretary of the Bombay Municipal Schools Committee became vacant and Ramabhau's friends induced him to apply for it. Fortunately for primary education, Ramabhau's application succeeded and he was selected as the Secretary of the Schools Committee of the Bombay Corporation. For the following 13 years, therefore, his home was in Bombay and he continued to hold the post of the Secretary of the Schools Committee and to administer the primary schools within the area of the City.

This appointment to a high and well-paid post was a great blessing, both personal and public. From the personal point of view, it brought in a period of comparative financial ease and stability for the family. According to the traditional custom, Ramabhau had been married in 1902 at the early age of fifteen and Sou. Sitabai was then only nine. Their family life began in 1907 and their first child, a son, was born in 1910. By 1928, the family had grown larger with six children and in addition Ramabhau was required to support and educate a number of other dependants as well. It was becoming increasingly difficult to fulfil all the obligations of such a large family in an out-of-the-way place like Malvan and on the meagre salary which the Head Master of the Topivala High School was allowed to draw. The change-over to Bombay, combined with the larger salary that now became available, made it possible to provide better education to the children and the dependants and also brought in freedom from many a domestic worry that is essentially financial in origin.

From the public point of view, the gain was even greater and of far-reaching significance. (His appointment as Secretary of the Schools



Committee brought him face to face with the problem of mass education with which he had little to do in the past.) (In the whole of his thesis, scholarly as it is, there is not even a reference to the outstanding problems of primary education to which he was to render so significant a service in later years.) (Even in his writings published prior to 1933 there is little or no reference to the problems of literacy or primary education.) (But his earlier absorption with secondary education now disappeared and his alert mind now began to grapple with the problems of mass education.) (As a Secretary of the Schools Committee, he was called upon to deal with almost every aspect of primary education, viz. the enforcement of compulsion which had been introduced in two Wards of the City a little earlier in 1925; the recruitment as well as academic and administrative control of a very large body of primary teachers; the difficulties involved in controlling primary schools through an ultra-democratic agency like the Schools Committee; the shortage of buildings; the paucity of funds; the intricate problems of curricula and teaching methods; and the large prevalence of problems like wastage or stagnation which made primary education largely ineffective in producing literacy.) (It took about five years for him to understand the problems of mass education in India and to work out a tentative solution for them.) (But by 1933 his academic and alert mind had prepared a tentative programme of mass education, not only for the City of Bombay, not even for the State of Bombay, but for the entire Indian continent itself.)

(The peculiar problem which Ramabhau was called upon to solve in the Municipal Schools Committee was that of finance.) (On the one hand, he found that the number of children to be educated was continually increasing, partly as a result of the growth of population in the City and partly in consequence of a growing desire for education.) (On the other hand, he found that the funds available for primary education were getting scantier.) As stated before, Ramabhau became Secretary to the Schools Committee in 1928. In the following year, the world economic depression set in and its effects were very keenly felt in India from 1930. Cuts and retrenchment became, therefore, the order of the day and the Schools Committee was required to solve the apparently impossible problem of educating more children on an inadequate and inelastic budget.) (It is to the credit of Ramabhau that he studied the problem in its sociological, historical and comparative aspects and came to the conclusion that new and more appropriate techniques of educational expansion had to be adopted if the goal of universal education was to be realised in an under-developed economy like that of India.) He set forth his conclusions in this respect in a small pamphlet entitled *Mass Education in India*\* which made an unobtrusive appearance in an early issue of the Local Self-Government Quarterly in 1934.

\* See pp. 41-88, *supra*.

5. Mass Education in India (1934): It is not improbable that even the publication of this pamphlet with its revolutionary ideas would have passed unnoticed and that it might have created no bigger stir than the falling of a single rain-drop in an expansive lake. But a miracle happened and the *Times of India* which has a capacity to make or unmake fames, decided to review the pamphlet. On the 23rd of March 1934, therefore, a well-drafted and appreciative leading article appeared in its columns and it recommended the scheme propounded by Shri R. V. Parulekar for the serious consideration of the people. After making out a case for *immediate* expansion of mass education and after pointing out that the country was not in a position to afford the huge financial outlay which a scheme of compulsory education drawn up on the traditional pattern would require, the article proceeded to state how Shri Parulekar proposed to solve the problem and said:

- (The necessity for an immediate expansion in primary education urges Mr. Parulekar to make suggestions for drastic reform. They are based on the experience of other countries and are eminently practical.) (In the first place he suggests that the five-year course of primary education should be reduced to one of four years.) (This is in consonance with the view of the Hartog Committee that a minimum course of four years is sufficient for ensuring literacy.) (Secondly, the compulsory age-period should be changed from 6-11 to 7-11.) (Thirdly, the number of subjects taught in the primary schools should be revised in order to make them simple and more easily understood by the children of the masses.) (The object of this suggestion is to concentrate on the essentials, the minimum required for literacy.) (Fourthly, the number of pupils per teacher in the primary schools should be increased from thirty to sixty on the rolls.) (This is the crux of the problem of educational expansion, and undoubtedly the most controversial.) It should be noted that in the earlier stages England, Germany and Japan, among other countries, allowed sixty or more pupils per teacher. (The Bombay teacher is not incompetent as compared with teachers in other parts of the world.) (Lastly, wherever classes of sixty pupils cannot be arranged for, a system of part-time instruction may be introduced, thus making it possible for each teacher to look after not less than sixty pupils.)
- "All these suggestions make inroads on 'efficiency' and fancy theories, but they have to be seriously considered if it is desired to make an end of illiteracy in the near future. It is only too obvious that the administration of the present system, limited as it is to one-third of the total number of children of school-going age, costs every anna that Government and local bodies can afford, and without a miracle it is unlikely that there will

be an expansion of education on present lines for the next hundred years. (The problem resolves itself into a choice between efficiency and expansion, the 'efficient instruction' of the few and the 'literacy' of the many. Assuming that compulsion is desirable, it is for this generation to decide whether it will be achieved in our life-time or left to the Greek Kalends.)

At the time when this article appeared in the press, there was a very large section of intelligentsia in this State which almost regarded it as a religious duty to read the leading articles of the *Times of India* every morning. On the 23rd of March 1934, therefore, thousands of intellectuals in the State suddenly awoke to the fact that one Mr. R. V. Parulekar who was the Secretary of the Municipal Schools Committee in Bombay had put forward an arresting scheme for the development of mass education. The number of such persons increased still further because the *Times of India* really started a chain of other sympathetic reviews in the press. The *Bombay Chronicle* and the *Free Press Journal* also wrote leaders on the problem on the 3rd of April and the *Bombay Sentinel* followed suit on the 6th of the same month. The Marathi press also did not lag behind and papers like the *Dnyanprakash*, *Sakal*, *Pratibha*, *Nirbhid* and *Chitramaya Jagat* took up the problem and wrote explanatory and commending articles. (The Gujarati press also accorded an enthusiastic welcome to the proposals. In a short time, therefore, the task begun by the *Times of India* was almost fully accomplished and Ramabhau's scheme had reached the leading citizens from all parts of the State and was being discussed in all official and non-official circles connected with primary education. "I awoke one morning," says Ramabhau, "and found myself famous".)

Is it merely due to the accident of the decision of the *Times of India* to write a leading article thereon that was responsible to secure such publicity to this pamphlet? Or was it due to any larger and deeper historical significance that the pamphlet attracted such universal attention and received so warm a commendation? It is true that the *Times of India* did a very signal service to the cause of mass education by reviewing this pamphlet in a leading article and that it materially contributed to securing public recognition to the proposals which it contained. But (it is also equally true to say that the pamphlet happened to be published at a critical time in the history of compulsory education in this State and that it would soon have attracted attention to itself, even if the *Times of India* has not selected it for front-rank publicity). The British administrators had opposed the public demand for compulsory primary education on the ground that, in a poor country like India, the principle of compulsory education was neither *desirable* nor *practicable*. (The efforts of social workers like Gopal Krishna Gokhale had succeeded in establishing the *desirability* of compulsory education and

the Bombay Primary Education Act of 1923 had given authority to the local bodies to introduce compulsion in urban and rural areas.) (But the practicability of a programme of universal, free and compulsory primary education had yet to be established and no one had been able to produce a scheme which the financial resources of the Government would be able to support.) (At this critical juncture, Ramabhau entered the scene with his revolutionary proposals and showed that even a poor country like India can have a programme of universal education and liquidate its mass illiteracy in a short time, if certain novel techniques of development which had been adopted by other nations in a similar state of economic and cultural development, were to be boldly accepted.) This announcement came as a great ray of hope to Indian educators because (it provided a convincing proof of the *practicability* of compulsory education in India. The pamphlet, therefore, marked a significant landmark in the history of mass education in India and carried the work of Gokhale a step further.) It would, therefore, have been impossible to ignore it altogether and it was bound to create a stir in educational circles, sooner or later.

It was not to be expected that so revolutionary an approach to the problem would remain unnoticed by the Department and it would not have been wrong to expect that (Government would welcome the proposals whose only object was to liquidate mass illiteracy in a short time.) (Unfortunately, however, the ideas put forward by the *Mass Education in India* were stoutly opposed by the Education Department which resented the fact that its policy of emphasizing 'quality' rather than 'quantity' had been challenged by Ramabhau.) The Officers of the Department, therefore, started a crusade against the ideology which he had put forward and a highly placed Departmental Officer went even to the extent of saying that "Shri R. V. Parulekar should be drowned in the Arabian Sea with his book". This general official opposition was also strengthened, to some extent, by adverse criticism from a few Indians as well. (Some of the opponents were men of great learning and integrity who had genuine differences of opinion on the subject and who felt that a rapid expansion of education on the lines indicated by Ramabhau would water down its quality to a level that would be dangerous to the interests of the country as a whole.) But a large part of the opposition came from circles which usually echoed official opinion and policies. (It is also interesting to note that a section of the Marathi Press tried to give a communal colour to the controversy by suggesting that Ramabhau's proposals were a deliberate attempt to keep the education of the masses at a lower level of efficiency.) But fortunately, the opposition to the proposals did not gather much strength and the support accorded to them was so general that the matter was ultimately taken to the legislature.

6. **Shri Gokhale's Resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council (1934):** Shri L. R. Gokhale who was then a Member of the Bombay Legislative Council and was greatly impressed by the proposals of Ramabhai moved the following resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council on 4th September 1934:—

“This Council recommends to Government that they should take immediate steps to achieve rapid expansion of mass education within the available financial resources by adopting the following, among other measures:—

- (a) simplification of the curriculum of the lower primary schools, that is, of Standards Infant to IV, so as to confine the instructions to the three R's;
- (b) reducing the period of instruction in the lower primary schools from five years (Infant and Standards I to IV) to four years (Standards I to IV);
- (c) entrusting, on an average, a large number of pupils than at present to the care of one teacher;
- ✓ (d) organising of the lower primary school instruction on the basis of the shift system; and
- (e) imparting of part-time instruction wherever necessary by the employment of peripatetic teachers.”

A very interesting debate followed and several members took part in the discussion. But the Hon'ble the Education Minister of this period, Diwan Bahadur S. T. Kambli, was not prepared to accept it. He pleaded that there was a good deal of difference of opinion among the educationists themselves on the points raised in the resolution. He, however, assured the House that it would be carefully considered. The resolution was withdrawn on this assurance, but Government did nothing to implement it, or even to examine it in detail.

7. **Literacy in India (1939):** This failure of a high-level attempt to induce Government to work out a programme of universal education on an unorthodox basis was a great set-back to the cause. Ramabhai, however, was undaunted and decided to organise educative propaganda for his proposals. With this object in view, he published a small book called Literacy in India \* in 1939. The fundamental thesis put forward in this book was the same as in the *Mass Education in India*; but it had some additional and distinctive features. To begin with, it made a successful attempt, the first of its type in India, to correlate the educational statistics of school attendance with the census statistics of adult literacy. This task had been attempted in the past on several occasions; but no one had yet succeeded in demonstrating the

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\* See pp. 89-211, *supra*.

correct relationship between the educational and census statistics. In this interesting study, however, Ramabhau correlated the two sets of statistics and conclusively established that "the completion of the third year class gives literacy according to the census standard". (Secondly, this book examines certain aspects of primary education like wastage, stagnation and single-teacher schools.) (These had been wrongly emphasized in the Report of the Hartog Committee whose main conclusion was that the system of primary education in India was largely ineffective and that it would, therefore, be desirable to concentrate on 'improvement' rather than on 'expansion'). (Ramabhau declared that this would be a fatal policy to be adopted in India. He admits that there is a good deal of wastage and ineffectiveness in the existing system, but he also points out that the extent of these evils has been greatly exaggerated. His further contention is that the only way to reduce these evils is not to go back and emphasize quality, but to go ahead very rapidly and to introduce universal compulsory education at an early date.) (Lastly, the book again emphasizes the proposals put forward in the earlier pamphlet and adduces further evidence in their support.)

A few extracts from this publication will show the main arguments put forward. "The purpose of this book," writes Ramabhau, "is to give a message of hope to those who will have the privilege of guiding the destinies of future India, that bad as our educational system has been, it has not been so bad as it is made out to be." The situation is hopeful if only we cease to be guided by the ideals of an advanced nation like England and adopt measures and practices which are more suited to the conditions of our people and the financial resources of our country." With reference to the minimum education required for the attainment of permanent literacy, Ramabhau points out that the book "devotes some pages to a critical examination of the available statistical and other data relating to mass education not only of this country, but of other countries as well. . . . The view prevailing in India today is that no child can be literate unless he completes the fourth-year class of the primary school; but the statistical inquiry undertaken with the object of testing the validity of this view showed that, as in the Dutch East Indies, in India also a child acquires census literacy if he is able to complete the third-year class of a primary school and that he retains it in his after-life." The Indian official view about the minimum four-class system necessary for acquiring literacy has tended to create exaggerated notions of the wastage problem and has been mainly responsible for the undue pessimism about India's capacity to finance schemes of universal primary education". (Ramabhau then proceeds to point out that "the percentage of literacy in India is very low and that its growth has been alarmingly tardy." The most potent cause of this halting progress is the smallness of the number of pupils under instruction in the schools.) A study of the educational statistics of other countries showed that soon after

their deciding to launch upon a programme of mass education, the numbers in schools have swollen to a remarkable extent. In India, on the other hand, at no time has this occurred. (It should be remembered that in any scheme of mass education, 'education must pour and not trickle'. The key to a rapid expansion of mass education in India, therefore, lies in increasing the numbers under instruction in schools as quickly as possible). Ramabhau then proceeds to analyse the different causes which have led to this slow progress of mass education in the past. He admits that the inability to find the necessary funds has, among other things, contributed materially to the slow expansion of primary education. (But he also contends that this has not been the *only*, and not even the *main* difficulty involved.) His own analysis is that the slow progress of Indian education is more due to "a lack of missionary zeal on the part of the administrators of education" and to "the tutelage of the teaching and administrative staffs" of the Department who have "found it impossible to depart from the routine and take initiative to explore fresh avenues of reform". ("This has been the fault of the system rather than of individuals," writes Ramabhau, "because the fear of expressing views which may go counter to those of persons in authority has helped to stifle all initiative.) Unless the system is so changed that this spirit of apathy and implicit acquiescence yields place to one of fearless enquiry and expression, there is little hope for the future of Indian education." Ramabhau then stresses the importance of literacy in a programme of national development and concludes with the following magnificent peroration:—

"An almost impassioned plea has been raised in these pages for the organisation of a nationwide drive for the early liquidation of mass illiteracy in the hope and belief that literacy would add to the moral and material welfare of the Indian people.) The study of history tells us that every nation, the moment it aspired to raise its status in the eyes of the world, has, as the first urgent measure, attempted to remove illiteracy and that its progress has synchronised with the liquidation of illiteracy.) (It is arguable, of course, that this may not happen in our unhappy land. But if water chokes, what shall we drink?"

8. **Literacy in India in Pre-British Days (1940):** Shortly after the publication of the *Literacy in India*, Ramabhau produced, in collaboration with Shri M. R. Paranjape, a small pamphlet entitled *Literacy in India in Pre-British Days*.<sup>\*</sup> The circumstances that led to the preparation of this paper were rather peculiar. In October 1931, Mahatma Gandhi had made an observation at the Round Table Conference in London that "India is more illiterate today than it was fifty or a hundred years ago . . . because the British administrators, when they came to

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<sup>\*</sup> See pp. 212-45, *supra*.

India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out). Sir Philip Hartog challenged this statement and wrote three memoranda, the chief purpose of which was "to remove, if possible, once for all, the imaginary bases for the assertions not infrequently made in India that the British Government systematically destroyed the indigenous system of elementary schools, and with it a literacy which the schools are presumed to have created". Thus began a memorable controversy in which some educationists argued that the statement made by Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference was fundamentally correct while others were inclined to think that his observations were based on a myth which had no sound historical foundations. Ramabhau and Paranjape took up this problem for a thorough investigation in the research paper mentioned above. (In the first part of the paper which was contributed by Ramabhau, it was proved that Gandhiji's statement which was made at a time when the literacy figures of the 1931 census were not available, must be regarded as fundamentally correct because the percentage of adult literacy given in the statistics of Adam (1835-38) is higher than that of 1911 and almost the same as that of 1921.) In the other half of the paper which was contributed by Shri M. R. Paranjape, it is first established that the word 'school' included two types of institutions in the early nineteenth century—a regular 'elementary school' of the ordinary type and a 'centre of domestic instruction' in which a teacher gave education to a few children at a time.) If this definition of a 'school' is properly understood and if due allowance is made for the large number of centres of domestic instruction which then existed, Paranjape proves out that Adam's Report regarding the existence of a lakh of 'schools' in Bengal and Bihar ceases to be a 'legend' and begins to appear as 'a conceivable fact'. (He also proves that the British Administrators were not entirely free from the charge of having made deliberate attempts to destroy the indigenous schools, although a large majority of them died of sheer neglect.) Between the two of them, therefore, Ramabhau and Paranjape fully vindicated the stand taken by Mahatma Gandhi. In order, however, to guard himself against any chauvinistic exaggerations, Ramabhau clearly enunciated the broad limitations to which his conclusions are subject. "It is not the purpose of this paper," writes Ramabhau, "to condemn the educational administration of India in the British period as bad in every respect or to praise the indigenous system of education which existed in India a hundred years ago as good in every way. Even the most violent critic of the British Government will admit that (modern educational institutions in India have been a great contribution of the British people towards the uplift of the country). But even a great blessing may have its defects. (A white elephant may be a valuable gift or a source of anxiety according to resources of the presentee.) The modern primary schools have been valuable institutions from the educational viewpoint; but they have



hindered rather than helped the spread of literacy, with the result that in this respect the country has made no advance since the days of Adam. (It is even held that India is at present less literate than she was a hundred years ago, and the view is based on good foundations.) (The wholesale replacement of indigenous schools by schools conducted or aided by the Education Department was not a wise step, and the contention of Indian leaders has been that if the British Government had recognised this fact early enough and not allowed the indigenous schools to decay and disappear for want of State support, British India would have shown a much better literacy figure today.)"

It is interesting to note that no one has yet come forward to refute the arguments advanced in this paper. It may, therefore, be assumed that the conclusions reached by Ramabhau and Paranjape have come to be largely accepted by the students of Indian education.

9. **A Period of Strains (1941-48):** In 1941, Ramabhau retired from the Municipal Schools Committee on attaining the age of 55. It was not financially possible for him to be without employment as he still had to maintain a large family and educate a number of children and dependants. Besides (it is also not in his temperament to sit idle as a retired official) He, therefore, accepted the invitation of Shri M. R. Paranjape, the then Principal of the Tilak College of Education, Poona, and became a member of the College staff. For one year, these two veterans worked together and placed the Tilak College of Education on a secure footing. In the following year, however, Paranjape retired from the position and Ramabhau also left the College and went to Kolhapur where Rao Bahadur Dr. P. C. Patil, the then Education Minister of the State, had invited him to be his Educational Adviser and Secretary. Ramabhau held this position for one year and then worked as the Principal of the Maharani Tarabai Teachers' Training College, Kolhapur, for two years (1943-45). During his stay in Kolhapur I have had the privilege of working as his colleague and can, therefore, testify to the extremely valuable services that he rendered to the cause of education in Kolhapur State. It is on record that the old Kolhapur State decided to reorganise its system of primary education on the lines recommended by Ramabhau and if the experiments had been conducted for a sufficient period, some practical results to demonstrate the validity of his thesis would have been available. It was, however, very unfortunate that, owing to uncertain political conditions, the policies initiated by him were neither properly executed nor maintained for a sufficiently long period. Ramabhau had fondly hoped that the Kolhapur State would provide results to justify his theories; but that was not to be.\*

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\* In 1930, Ramabhau and his friends had carried out an educational survey of the Sawantwadi State at the instance of the Ruler. But his proposals in the matter were not pursued, mainly on account of financial difficulties, and the scheme failed to materialise.

As stated earlier, Shri L. R. Gokhale had tried to obtain official acceptance for the views of Ramabhau as early as in 1934. This attempt, like most pioneer enterprises, failed to achieve its object. When, however, the Congress Ministry came to office in 1937, the hopes of official support were again revived. Ramabhau was appointed a member of the Joshi Committee on vocational education and of the Manshardt Committee on Adult Education. The reports of both these Committees approve of some aspects of Ramabhau's scheme. But these are so sketchy that they do not amount to an official acceptance of the scheme as a whole. A third opportunity to press for the official acceptance of his views, however, came soon afterwards in 1940 when the Provincial Board of Primary Education was constituted by Government under the Bombay Primary Education Act, 1923, as amended in 1938. This Board consisted of 12 members of whom six were elected by the School Boards and the remaining were nominated by Government. Ramabhau was nominated on this Board for the triennium beginning with 1940. Smt. Hansa Mehta, the present Vice-Chancellor of the M. S. University, Baroda, was the Chairman of the Board and its other members included Shri D. N. Desai, the present Education Minister of the State, Shri L. R. Desai, the present Principal of the A. G. Teachers' College, Ahmedabad, Shri Syed Nurullah, the present Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Muslim University, Aligarh, Shri S. R. Tawade, the then Educational Inspector, Dharwar, and myself. (As was to be expected, Ramabhau placed his scheme before this Board which examined it in all aspects and unanimously recommended that it should be accepted by the Government of Bombay with the modification that the shift system should be introduced, in the first instance, in the first two standards only. Unfortunately, the Congress Ministry was out of office by the time these recommendations were made and hence the entire matter had to remain in cold storage for a few years.) The problem was, however, taken up by Shri B. G. Kher, the then Education Minister of the State, when he came back to office again in 1946. (Shri Kher had always been a supporter of the plans which Ramabhau had been advocating and luckily, Shri D. C. Pavate, the then Director of Education, was also a staunch advocate of the rapid expansion of education among the masses. Government, therefore, accepted the proposals made by the Provincial Board of Primary Education. The Infant Class was abolished and the ages of admission and compulsion were raised to six *plus* and seven *plus* respectively. The duration of the primary course was reduced to four years and the shift system was introduced in the first two standards. It was also decided to introduce compulsory education in the areas of all the N.L.A. Municipalities and in all villages with a population of 1,000 or more, in accordance with a planned programme of five years; and it was further announced that universal, compulsory and free primary education of four years would be introduced in all parts of the

State in a period of 10 to 12 years. With this announcement, Ramabhau won his first major victory after a continuous struggle of more than 12 years.) (His ideas were now officially accepted in the State of Bombay and formed the basis of one of the most outstanding programmes of educational expansion prepared by the State Governments in India during the last ten years.)

These public victories for his educational theories were a great gain no doubt; but from the personal point of view, it may be said that the period of seven years between 1941 and 1948 was not a happy one on the whole. Ramabhau was now required to make a frequent change in his place of residence, first to Poona in 1941 and then to Kolhapur in 1943; and it was only in 1945 that he returned to Bombay and made it his permanent home. The increase in the cost of living due to the Second World War added materially to his financial responsibilities, especially as he had to provide for the secondary and collegiate education of a number of children and dependants. On the other hand, his income was considerably reduced because of intermittent employment. He was, therefore, required to draw largely on the accumulated reserve of his small savings. But (as is usually the way with him, Ramabhau took his adversities very coolly and even in the midst of the most trying difficulties and anxieties, maintained an admirable balance of mind and an inimitable sense of humour) (What is more surprising, he did not relax his studies of educational problems in any way and even under the most trying circumstances of this period, he was able to render four great services to the cause of education in this State.)

**10. Publication of Manuscript Secretariat Records on Education in Bombay State (1945):** The first of these was a project on which he had set his heart for a number of years. His interest in old historical documents had been greatly kindled when he was preparing for his M.Ed. thesis in England and it was revived after 1928 when he began to stay in Bombay. He now had several opportunities to inspect and study the manuscript educational records preserved in the Bombay Secretariat, and it was his favourite pastime, even in the midst of the multifarious duties he was required to perform as the Secretary of the Schools Committee, to examine and edit these historical documents.† He, therefore, decided to publish a series of selections from these records and thereby throw valuable light on the early history of education in this State. So long as he was burdened with administrative duties of one type or the other, it was not possible for him to take up this project and complete it. But as he had some leisure while working as the principal of the S.M.T.T. College, Kolhapur, he decided to bring out at least the first volume of

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\* Shri S. R. Tawade has been an enthusiastic supporter of Ramabhau and has translated *Mass Education in India* in Marathi, even at the risk of considerable official displeasure.

the projected series. With the help of Dr. B. B. Samant who was then a member of the College Staff, he collected all the documents bearing on the surveys of indigenous education conducted in the State of Bombay between 1820 and 1830 and published them, with a very masterly introduction, in a single book \* which he described as the first volume of *Shri Narayanrao Topiwala Memorial Educational Research Series*. Unfortunately, he had to carry out this project with extremely limited funds and get the book printed in Kolhapur where facilities for efficient printing in English are not available. The publication, therefore, leaves much to be desired and its paper, type, size and general get-up are far from satisfactory. But in spite of its unattractive get-up, the book supplied a great need because this was the first occasion when the old educational records of the Government of Bombay were made available to the students of education in a printed form.

**II. Report on the Reorganisation of Primary Education in the City of Bombay (1948):** The second important project carried out by Ramabhau during this difficult period refers to the reorganisation of the administration of primary education in the City of Bombay. For a long time, the Bombay Corporation was thinking of reorganising the administration of the Schools Committee. When Ramabhau returned to Bombay and had some time to spare for problems of this type, the Corporation appointed him as a Special Officer to study and report on the manner in which the administration of primary education in the City was to be remodelled. With the assistance of Shri C. L. Bakshi, who had retired after a long service under the Schools Committee, Ramabhau prepared a valuable Report and submitted it to the Corporation in 1948.†

Books or reports bearing on the problems of educational administration in India are very rare and it is a general opinion that Ramabhau's Report on the Reorganisation of Primary Education in the City of Bombay is one of the most masterly documents in this field. (A good administrative report can only be written by a person who combines an academic outlook with the practical experience of day-to-day administration.) Such persons are very rare and we either get the academic professor of educational administration who has had no practical experience or the veteran administrator who has trained himself in a rule-of-the-thumb manner and has had no time for academic studies. It has been the good fortune of Ramabhau to be able to combine an academic outlook and a scholarly grasp of the theoretical knowledge of the subject with a very intimate experience of the difficulties of practical administra-

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\* This was designated *A Source Book of History of Education in the Bombay Province, Part I, Survey of Indigenous Education (1820-30)*.

† This has been entitled "Report on Revision of Constitution, Powers and Duties of the School Committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and on the same Educational and Administrative Problems of Primary Education in the City of Bombay." It has since been published by the Corporation (1949).

tion. Ramabhau is, therefore, one of the few persons in this State who are well qualified to write a dissertation on administrative problems and the excellence of his Report on the Reorganisation of Primary Education in the City of Bombay can always be cited as a good illustration of this theory.

It is neither possible nor necessary to enumerate here the large number of recommendations which Ramabhau has made in the course of this Report. The most important of these were three: In the first place, (Ramabhau made a very strong recommendation that the administration of primary education in the City should be placed directly under the Municipal Commissioner by a suitable legislative enactment.) Secondly, he stressed the importance of properly constructed buildings if compulsory primary education was to be satisfactorily enforced and suggested that a comprehensive but short-range programme should be drawn up for the purpose; and thirdly, he advocated the establishment of a Research Bureau for carrying out investigations on problems of primary education.) All these recommendations were accepted by the Corporation and the Government. The old form of administration under which the Schools Committee used to function independently of the Municipal Commissioner was done away with and was replaced by an Education Committee constituted on slightly different lines. The post of the Secretary to the Schools Committee was converted into that of an Education Officer who was directly responsible to the Commissioner. The Corporation has now approved of a building programme of ten years during which period, a sum of Rs. 25 lakhs a year is proposed to be spent on the construction of primary school buildings. (A Research Bureau has also been created and Dr. Smt. Madhuri Shah, Ph.D., has recently been appointed as the Officer-in-charge. This is the first Research Bureau of its type to be established by a Municipality in the whole of India, and a part of the credit for this valuable reform goes undoubtedly to the educationist who suggested it.) The other recommendations of Ramabhau are also being gradually implemented. The great service which Ramabhau did to the cause of primary education in the City during his long tenure of office as Secretary of the Schools Committee is well known. But it is a curious coincidence of life that the service which he rendered to this cause *after* his retirement was even greater.

12. **The Ghate-Parulekar Committee (1947-48):** The third important service which Ramabhau did to education during this period was in his capacity (as a member of the *SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMITTEE* appointed by the Government of Bombay in 1947. This Committee consisted of two members only—Shri V. D. Ghate and Shri R. V. Parulekar and is hence popularly known as the Ghate-Parulekar Committee. Its Report, which is probably the most important docu-

ment in the history of Secondary Education in the State since 1947, examined several administrative problems such as the system of grant-in-aid to secondary schools, the rates of school-fees, the emoluments and service-conditions of secondary teachers, etc., and made a number of important recommendations. Government accepted many of them *in toto* and most of the others were adopted with slight modifications.) (Probably the most outstanding achievement of this Report was the introduction of a common scale of pay for *all* secondary teachers, irrespective of the fact whether they served in governmental or private school.) (It is known as the Ghate-Parulekar (or briefly G.P.) scale and covers the range of Rs. 80-200 for trained graduates.) (In addition, teachers were given dearness and some other allowances according to rates framed by Government.) (It also provided for reasonable security of tenure and led to the adoption of a uniform system of grant-in-aid calculated at a prescribed percentage of approved expenditure.) It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that (this Report has done a lasting service to the cause of secondary education in general and to that of secondary teachers in particular.)

13. **Educational Survey of the Ratnagiri District (1947-48):** The fourth important educational contribution of Ramabhau during this period was to hold an educational survey of the Ratnagiri District. It is well known that the expression "village", as used in census records means a "revenue village". It is fundamentally a unit of area and all the people living on that area are shown as the "population" of the village concerned. But it often happens that a single revenue village is often divided into a number of hamlets or *Wadis* each of which is an independent "population centre". Not infrequently, these hamlets or *Wadis* are separated by some miles so that the children from one cannot attend a school located in another. What an educationist needs, therefore, is the determination of the exact number of "population centres" and their distances from one another so that a programme of locating primary schools can be carefully planned with the object of avoiding all overlapping. (As early as 1911, the Government of India had recommended that educational surveys of all the States should be carried out so as to enable the Education Department to provide a school for *every* village, however humble, at a minimum total cost.) But no action had been taken on this recommendation. Ramabhau, therefore, decided to carry out a sample survey of the Ratnagiri District with the main object of demonstrating the utility of the concept. Assisted by the generous donation of Rs. 1,000 which was given by Shri Motiram Narayanrao Desai, the Local Self-Government Institute, Bombay, took up the cause and under its auspices, Ramabhau carried out the survey of Rajapur Taluka with the help of two local colleagues—Shri D. J. Kulkarni and D. J. Sardeshpande of the Rajapur High School. The Report of this survey, which was soon published by the Institute,

attracted considerable notice and the Government of Bombay was induced to sanction funds for the survey of the District as a whole. Ramabhau was associated with this work as Honorary Director and his two old colleagues helped him in this task also. The trio laboured at this project for about six months (1947-48) and prepared a voluminous report in Marathi which gives all details of the 1,345 villages of the District which are divided into 9,017 hamlets or *Wadis*. It has since been published in a summary form by Government (1950) and its main result was to set up a regular chain of similar surveys. The Government of Bombay kept up the idea and carried out the surveys of six other Districts, but for some unexplained reason, the work was halted before the entire State could be surveyed. The pioneer service which Ramabhau did to this cause cannot, however, be ignored. (He revived a very useful idea and developed it to such an extent that it could even attract the attention of the Government of India and find a place for itself in the Second Five-Year Plan. It may be recalled that this plan provides Rs. 25 lakhs for an educational survey of the whole of India.)

14. **Director of the Indian Institute of Education (1948-56):** In June 1948 still another phase began in Ramabhau's life with the founding of the *INDIAN INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION*. The establishment of this organisation was made possible because of the valuable co-operation of the late Shri G. V. Mavlankar who became its President, Smt. Hansa Mehta and Shri Dinkarrao N. Desai who became its Vice-Presidents, Shri M. T. Vyas who became the Chairman and Shri S. S. Naik and C. D. Barfivala of the Local Self-Government Institute who helped it in every way they could. (Ramabhau has been its Director since 1948 and it is his inspiration and guidance that has enabled the Institute to make a remarkable contribution to education in the fields of teaching, research, publications, and educational experimentation. From 1948 to 1954, it conducted classes for the M.Ed. degree by papers and trained about 350 students, some of whom have distinguished themselves in academic fields and have since come to hold important posts in the Department, universities and other educational institutions.) (In the field of educational research, the Institute has also made an equally important contribution. From 1948 to 1956, it admitted about 75 students to the M.Ed. (by research) and Ph.D. Courses. Of these, a total of 16 students completed approved research work and obtained degrees—7 obtaining the M.Ed. degree and 9 the Ph.D. degree in education. Besides, as many as 132 students worked on some educational problems for their dissertation.) They all obtained a training in research methods and some of them even made a humble contribution of their own to the thought or available data on some problem. (The Institute has also published a number of useful books and research monographs and it even conducted a research journal for about three years.) (Finally, the experimental work of the Institute led to the founding of

Shri Mouni Vidya Peeth which has since grown into a Rural Institute and is one of the ten institutions selected for the purpose by the Government of India in the country as a whole.)

It is of course true that these great achievements were a co-operative enterprise of Ramabhau and all his colleagues. But it must be pointed out that his personal contribution to the achievement of these results was indeed very considerable and it is all the more necessary to do so because Ramabhau himself is always belittling his own achievements at the Institute. He regularly lectured to the M.Ed. Students on history, administration and philosophy of education. It is no exaggeration to say that his were some of the most popular lectures at the Institute. While their clarity and scholarship were unchallenged and greatly appreciated, what really distinguished them and endeared them to the students was their superabundance of humour. No subject can be too dry for Ramabhau who always sends his class into roars of laughter irrespective of the topic he might be speaking on. In the field of research, it may be said that a large number of students have worked under Ramabhau's guidance and got the M.Ed. or Ph.D. degrees. In a research paper, Dr. V. V. Kamat has pointed out that, out of a total of 64 theses accepted so far by the University of Bombay, as many as 14 were prepared under Ramabhau.\* These cover a variety of subjects; but as is quite natural the theses on problems dealing with history—the chief interest of Ramabhau in educational research—are more numerous than any other. In respect of publications, Ramabhau's great achievement during this period was to revive and develop the Narayanrao Topiwala Memorial Educational Research Series. This was possible partly because of the financial assistance given by Shri Motiram Desai and the Governments of India and Bombay, and partly because of the excellent co-operation he received from Shri C. L. Bakshi. The volume of old records which he had brought out at Kolhapur was again reprinted; † three further volumes were published; and one more is under preparation.‡ In short, it may be said that a considerable part of the work turned out by the Institute was a personal contribution of Ramabhau, to say nothing of the high status which his very presence as Director conferred upon that organisation.

Side by side with the Indian Institute of Education, another educational institution in Bombay also claimed the first rank in Ramabhau's affections. This was the *Bal Mohan Vidya Mandir* founded by Shri S. D. Rege (known as "Dada" to all his pupils, friends and

\* For a list of these, see *Appendix I*. It must be pointed out that some of them belonged to the S.M.T.T. College, Kolhapur, and the S.T. College, Bombay, with which institutions also Ramabhau was associated as a research professor.

† As only 250 copies had been printed in 1945, the book was entirely out of stock by 1949.

‡ For details, see *Appendix II*.



admirers) in 1940. Dada is one of the ablest primary teachers and competent organisers that I have ever come across and the Bal Mohan Vidya Mandir which has now grown into a big school that conducts pre-primary, primary and secondary departments and enrolls about 2,500 pupils bears eloquent tribute to the capacity of this man of humble academic attainments and humbler financial resources. Ramabhau was attracted to this institution partly because of his love and respect for Dada and partly because Dada's father had been a teacher of his at the primary stage. He had declared the school open in 1940 when he was Secretary of the Schools Committee; but he had not been able to keep in close touch with it when he was at Poona and Kolhapur. On his return to Bombay in 1946, however, he accepted the post of the Honorary Educational Adviser of the school and made it his official headquarters. Ramabhau's paternal guidance combined with the zeal and capacity of Dada has developed the school into one of the best educational institutions of its type in the City of Bombay and recently, it has even been able to construct a building for itself at a cost of more than five lakhs of rupees.

(With the Indian Institute of Education and the Bal Mohan Vidya Mandir to lean on—Ramabhau calls them the two affectionate nurses of his old age—life in Bombay became comparatively easier.) In the early years of this period, Ramabhau was still extremely hard-pressed for funds partly because the cost of living had increased greatly and partly because his children were receiving education at the collegiate stage. Towards the end of the period, however, he was able to settle down more comfortably than in the earlier period. Even before he came to Bombay in 1946, his eldest son had already been married and well settled in Bombay. During this period, his second son who had been married a little earlier also settled down to his own life. His third son completed his education at the medical college, got married, and started practising on his own. His fourth son developed a printing business for which he has a special aptitude and the fifth entered the automobile industry. His youngest son also completed his education and obtained a job in Government service. The elder of his two daughters was suitably married and the younger, who was trained as a primary teacher, began to follow a useful career in the teaching profession. The son of his brother, M. V. alias Baburao Parulekar (now the Headmaster of the Topiwala High School), who had also been educated by Ramabhau, completed his preparation for the profession of a Chartered Accountant and, by the end of the period under review, settled down in a well-established firm of good reputation. Ramabhau's great family difficulty was that all but two of his children were very young at the time of his retirement and he had to provide for their costly education at the secondary and collegiate stage when his own income was both meagre and uncertain. He had to face this ordeal for about

fifteen years. But the dark period did come to an end at last and, as all is well that ends well, Ramabhau can now look forward to a life of comparative ease and to freedom from financial worries which had beset him almost continuously since 1941.

15. **Other Activities (1948-56):** It should not be thought, however, that his work at the Institute and at the Bal Mohan Vidya Mandir could keep Ramabhau fully occupied. In spite of his years, he had still such superabundance of energy that he could attend to a number of other activities as well. By now, his reputation as an educationist was well-established not only in Bombay State but in the whole of India. Several calls were, therefore, made upon him and it must be said to his credit that he accepted many of them and carried out his responsibilities with an earnestness and efficiency which is but rarely equalled.

A few of the numerous engagements that he thus fulfilled during this period may be mentioned here. He was often invited to lecture to the M.Ed. students by the Universities of Baroda, Poona and Karnatak and almost every year, he was invited to be an examiner by a number of Universities. The Government of Bombay appointed him as a member of the *Provincial Board of Secondary Education* and that body later on elected him as Chairman and this election made him an *ex-officio* member of the *STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION* of the Bombay State. This consisted of the Chairmen of all the Provincial Boards of Education and the Education Minister himself was its President. (It was here that Ramabhau mooted out a suggestion that the State should organise a research section as a part of the Education Department. A Committee to work out the scheme was also appointed but it never met and for some inexplicable reason, the whole project seemed to have fizzled out.) (It is extremely gratifying to note, however, that a Research Bureau has recently been set up in the office of the Director of Education at Poona. A project of still greater significance was his association with the *MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA*.) He was a Visiting Professor at the University and, as already stated, used to lecture to the students on the history and administration of education. For a time, he was a member of the Board of Studies in Education and also of the Senate. It may even be said that, next to Bombay, Ramabhau was most closely associated with this University and that he made a significant contribution to the development of its Faculty of Education and Psychology.\* (As the Director of the Indian Institute of Education, he has recently become an *ex-officio* member of the Senate, Academic Council, and Board of Studies in Teaching of

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\* It would not be out of place to state here that Ramabhau was a member of the University Committee appointed to report on the affiliation of the Secondary Teachers' College, Baroda (out of which the present Faculty has been evolved) in 1934 and that its affiliation to the university was largely due to his warm support and strenuous efforts. Ramabhau performed a similar service for the S.M.T.T. College, Kolhapur, also.

the *University of Bombay*. From 1951 to 1954, he was nominated as a member of the *S.S.C. Examination Board, Poona*. Here also, he put forward a proposal that a research section should be organised under the Board. This was accepted both by the Board and by the Government of Bombay and a research officer has since been working on some examination problems.)

16. **The City Social Education Committee of Bombay:** Another institution with which Ramabhau was very closely associated during this period was the *CITY SOCIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF BOMBAY*. With his keen interest in the problem of literacy, it is hardly a matter of surprise if he should be intimately and effectively associated with the literacy movement in the State. As stated earlier, Ramabhau was a member of the Adult Education Committee of 1937. He was also associated with the literacy campaign which the Social Service League organised in Bombay City in 1939 and was appointed a member of the Bombay City Adult Education (now called Social Education) Committee right from its start. This association has continued unbroken and for some years past, Ramabhau has also been elected as one of its Vice-Presidents. As in other spheres, this position gave Ramabhau an opportunity to promote the spirit of enquiry and he tried to organise research in the field of adult literacy also. As a personal contribution to the problem, he tried to correlate the literacy and census statistics of the decade 1931-41, just as he had correlated them for the decade 1921-31 in his book, *Literacy in India*. This paper \* is a little inconclusive but it does throw valuable light on the contribution of the voluntary schools and adult classes. Moreover, it was also at his instance that the Committee has undertaken some research work in adult literacy and a new tradition is now growing up in the field, slowly but steadily. In appreciation of his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee as well as of his close study of the problem, Ramabhau was elected President of the *All-India Adult Education Conference* held at Patna in 1954. (His address on this occasion † sums up his usual ideas on the subject very pointedly and shows the need and significances of (1) emphasizing the early liquidation of illiteracy, (2) the organisation of a research unit, (3) the dangers inherent in a hasty expansion programme based on compulsion, and (4) the importance of evolving more scientific techniques of teaching adults.) One may feel that it is a little too conservative; but there can be no difference of opinion on the sincerity and zest which underlie his entire approach.

17. **The Committee on Elementary Education in Madras (1953):** A still greater distinction came when an invitation was extended to him by the Government of Madras at the instance of Shri C. Rajagopalachari

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\* See pp. 246-57.

† See pp. 258-68.

who was then its Chief Minister, to be the Chairman of a Committee appointed to examine his new scheme of elementary education. (Ever since 1937, the supporters of Basic Education had opposed the introduction of the shift system and the adoption of shorter school hours at the primary stage.) The general opinion, therefore, was that the country had to choose between two mutually exclusive alternatives—Basic Education or the shift system. Somehow, Shri Rajagopalachari had thought intensively about the problem and had come to the conclusion that the shift system and Basic Education were not incompatible and that it is really possible to combine the financial advantages of the shift system with the educational advantages of Basic Education. When he was the Governor-General of India, he first gave public utterance to these views at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay; but they did not attract adequate notice. When, however, he became the Chief Minister of Madras a little later, he decided to put them in actual practice on a State-wide scale. The decision was fundamentally sound; but it was probably a little too hasty and unfortunately, several political considerations conspired together to rouse a violent opposition to it. It was, therefore, felt desirable to refer the whole matter to a Committee of Experts for examination. (Ramabhau was invited to be the Chairman of the Committee and its unanimous Report is a document of great historical significance to Indian education.) It marks one step forward in the further evolution of Ramabhau's ideas and reconciles the conflicting demands of the shift system and Basic Education by reducing formal instruction to three hours a day and by organising an out-of-school programme of suitable activities to make up for this deficiency.\*

18. **Text-Books:** Another educational but minor activity of Ramabhau during this period was the preparation of some text-books. Prior to 1941, his only venture in the field was to prepare, in collaboration with another officer, a series of *Safety Education* books for Bombay's children. But he had no financial interest in them. After his retirement, however, he took up the task in right earnest and is now known as the author of some good text-books in Geography and Arithmetic. His first books on Geography were prepared in collaboration with Shri A. N. Sane and Shri Bhansaheb Ajgaonkar. On the death of the latter, Shri Modak of Poona was admitted as an additional colleague. His work on Arithmetic, however, has been published recently and has been done in collaboration with Shri Dada Rege. Still more recently, he has also collaborated with Kumari Reuben in preparing a text-book in English. It is true that the main object of those who write text-books is to earn money. Ramabhau is no exception to this rule, but I do believe that it is a distinct service to education to write a good text-book.

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\* The Report of the Committee has been officially published by the Government of Madras.

Ramabhau's books on Geography are so popular and have been so widely used that they ought to be looked upon as a service to education although its significance might not be very great.

19. **Ramabhau the Man:** The foregoing review of the main events of Ramabhau's life and his principal writings may be taken as a fairly comprehensive introduction to Ramabhau the educationist. To those who know him only from his writings, Ramabhau the educationist is all that matters. But the more fortunate few who have come in close personal contact with him will readily agree that Ramabhau the man is an extremely lovable person in himself and that he would have been remembered, loved and admired as a great teacher and a good friend even if he had not written a single line nor put forward a single theory.

I was first introduced to Ramabhau through his books when I came across his *Mass Education in India* and *Literacy in India*. At that time, I was working in villages and was trying to grapple with several problems of rural primary education. Both these books gave me a new vision and helped me to understand my problems and to work out some tentative solutions for them. But captivated as I greatly was with these brilliant documents, I had never looked forward to the happiness of meeting him in person and if any astrologer or palmist had then told me that I would become his friend one day, I would have ridiculed the suggestion as fantastic. But life has not yet lost its capacity to work out miracles; and I met Ramabhau in 1940 at the house of Shri S. R. Tawade who was then Educational Inspector at Dharwar. I had also the good fortune, as stated already, to work as his colleague on the Provincial Board of Primary Education. In a very short time, our relations developed from a mere acquaintance into friendship and from friendship into camaraderie in a common cause. I feel very proud of the fact that I have been his colleague for more than a quarter century, have shared all his ideas on mass education, and have even been able to work them out in some greater detail. Our association has indeed been so close that I have almost become a member of his family and from this vantage point, I have gradually been able to realise some of the great qualities of Ramabhau the man—his simplicity of life, his unbounded affection for every underdog on earth, his extreme kindliness, his capacity to forget personal insults or even injuries, his aversion for scenes or quarrels, his inexhaustible capacity for continuous and intensive intellectual work, his unbending devotion to the one ideal of his life—the spread of mass education in India, and his innate sense of humour which has enabled him to triumph over all the manifold adversities of his life.)

I wish I had the space to describe Ramabhau the man in detail. I could then narrate many an incident in his life to illustrate what I have said above and try to paint the portrait of a life which can be a good example for any teacher to follow. But in this book which is

mainly concerned with Ramabhau's contribution to educational thought, such personal biography is a little out of place and I will have to reserve it for another occasion. But even in this brief review, I cannot help describing the two outstanding qualities of life that have attracted me most in Ramabhau. (The first is his spirit of moderation and compromise. Whether in speech or in writing, Ramabhau will never go to extremes. His praise as well as his condemnation is always so balanced that it never hurts anyone. When he differs from others, he does it with inimitable grace and humility. He is always striving to understand differing viewpoints and to work out a compromise formula that would be acceptable to all concerned. The mere presence of Ramabhau on a committee is regarded as a guarantee of some unanimous decision) and I can recall several instances where this unique capacity of his proved almost providential. When a violent controversy crops up, Ramabhau generally sits listening with his eyes shut—a common habit of his which has led to many a comic misunderstanding on several occasions—and refuses to be drawn into it on any provocation. But not a word or phrase ever escapes him and he keeps on thinking about it till everyone has almost exhausted himself with arguments. (Then Ramabhau suddenly breaks his silence, sums up the debate, compliments each side on their good points, and slowly unfolds a new formula in which each side gains something) Generally, he combines his proposal with some good joke or the other so that everyone laughs and accepts the compromise and a round of tea helps to clear the atmosphere till another fight starts over the next item on the agenda. Ramabhau has thus saved many a meeting or committee which would otherwise have ended quite differently.

(The second most lovable quality of Ramabhau is his irrepressible sense of humour.) To be in the company of Ramabhau is to laugh almost continuously over one thing or the other and I am almost tempted to say that a person who has felt his comfort long would even forget to weep. Moreover, what has impressed me most is not the capacity of Ramabhau to make the company laugh—many a heartless wit or brainless joker can do that—but (his genius for making everybody laugh without hurting anyone. Lucas said that the best humourist is one whose jokes are reported by those against whom they are cut.) This is entirely applicable to Ramabhau who would never hurt anyone for the pleasure of raising a laugh. Most of his jokes are impersonal and everyone can share them. But when he must laugh at a person, he generally selects himself as the target. I have yet to come across a person who enjoys jokes against himself to such an extent. When Ramabhau gets into an autobiographical mood—this often happens after a good meal (Ramabhau loves good meals, especially those containing rice, fish, curds and mangoes)—he regales his friends with an endless series of personal anecdotes in which he laughs against himself. For instance, he would describe his early marriage and how he agreed to it because his grand-

mother told him that he would never get another bride; how his father was extremely anxious to see a grandson but how the old man died disappointed; how he attempted to number his children, how it created a dilemma when twins were born, and how he got out of it by calling them Nos. 5(a) and 5(b); how it was then a sacrilege for a Headmaster to meet his European Inspector in 'native' clothes and how he was once compelled to borrow somebody else's European clothes and practise walking with ill-fitting boots when the Educational Inspector was to visit his school; how miserable he felt because he had to forego, on account of a silly traditional custom, all the excellent chicken served on board the steamer that took him to England; how he contrived to get a fish to eat when he was in Italy and could only communicate with the waiter by placing his finger on a suitable word in the Anglo-Italian dictionary he had purchased for himself; how he tried in vain to give up smoking—the solitary vice of his life; how he tried to live on borrowed cigarettes—he calls them O.P. or 'Other People's Brand'—until his friends threatened to give up smoking altogether; and so on. I had often heard it said that laughter is man's best defence against personal adversity and that the capacity to laugh at oneself is a good guarantee for the proper development of one's personality; but I had never realised its significance till I met Ramabhau. I think that there can be no better proof for these doctrines than the life of Ramabhau himself.

20. **Ramabhau's contribution to Educational Thought:** The charming personality of Ramabhau is known only to the circle of his friends and its memory will pass out with them. But his educational ideology is known to thousands of teachers and administrators who do not or even cannot know him personally and it has obtained a permanent place for itself in the history of Indian Education. This brief biographical account may, therefore, be fittingly closed with an evaluation of his contribution to educational thought—a contribution which, I am sure, will be remembered long after he and all of us have ceased to be.

Historically, Ramabhau stands in direct succession to Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the great champion of the cause of mass education. (Gokhale would yield to none in his desire for the early introduction of universal, compulsory and free primary education and for that purpose, was willingly prepared to sacrifice quality.) ("The primary purpose of mass education," he said, "is to banish illiteracy from the land; the quality of education is a matter of importance that comes only after illiteracy has been banished.") (Ramabhau is convinced that this is the only correct approach to the problem in a poor country like India and he has consequently stuck to it for all these years.) It must be noted, however, that he does not merely repeat the words of Gokhale, his *guru*. He has actually carried the torch a step further and worked out a feasible scheme for the realisation of Gokhale's ideal. That this

scheme was not universally accepted by contemporary administrators is everybody's misfortune. But the very fact that it is gradually finding a larger area of acceptance is a proof of its truth and vitality. To have discovered this practicable method of achieving expansion in spite of the slender financial resources available and to have held up Gokhale's ideals before the people for upwards of two decades is the great contribution of Ramabhau to the educational thought of India. His other contributions are comparatively of lesser significance but are quite important in themselves. Among them may be mentioned the publication of the old educational records of the Bombay Secretariat, stimulation of educational research, encouragement of private educational enterprise, and the pioneer development of studies in educational administration. When all his contributions are put together, I feel no hesitation in saying that (he is one of the great educationists that Maharashtra has produced during the last fifty years.) May he be blessed with a long and peaceful life and be spared to perform still greater services to the cause of education in days to come!

Gargoti,  
18th June 1956

J. P. NAIK